SYMPTOM

Farting

Farting is the release of digestive gas through the anus.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE
Gas passing from your bottom, sometimes with pressure

WHERE IT IS FELT
Belly and bottom

MOST COMMON CAUSES
Swallowed air, fermenting foods, constipation

WHEN IT IS URGENT
Severe belly pain with vomiting or marked swelling

USUALLY LASTS
Minutes to weeks, depending on food and digestion

SEE A DOCTOR IF
It persists or comes with weight or bowel changes

Overview

Farting, also called flatulence or wind, is gas leaving your digestive tract through the anus. It is a normal part of digestion and does not usually mean anything is wrong.

Gas enters your digestive system when you swallow air. It is also produced when bacteria in the large intestine break down carbohydrates that were not fully digested. Most digestive gas has little or no smell; the odour comes mainly from small amounts of sulfur-containing gases.

What is normal differs between people and can change with food, bowel habits, and activity. Persistent wind alongside pain, weight loss, bleeding, or a lasting bowel change should be assessed.

What it may feel or look like

You may notice gas passing more often, making more noise, or smelling stronger than usual. It may happen voluntarily or escape without much warning.

Other symptoms can include:

Gas pain can feel sharp and move around the belly. It usually eases when the gas passes.

Severe, persistent, or localised pain needs more attention.

- A bloated or visibly swollen belly
- Cramping, pressure, or rumbling
- Belching
- Temporary relief after passing gas
- Constipation or diarrhoea

Common causes

Common causes: You may swallow extra air when eating quickly, talking while eating, chewing gum, drinking through a straw, smoking, or having fizzy drinks.

Bacteria produce gas by fermenting carbohydrates that reach the large intestine without being fully digested. Triggers may include beans, lentils, onions, cabbage, broccoli, whole grains, and some fruits. These foods are often nutritious, and their effects differ between people.

Constipation can trap gas and make bloating more noticeable. A sudden increase in fibre may also cause temporary gas while your digestive system adjusts.

Less common causes: Lactose intolerance can cause gas, bloating, pain, or diarrhoea after dairy products. Similar symptoms may occur when the body has difficulty absorbing fructose or other carbohydrates.

Coeliac disease, irritable bowel syndrome, and inflammatory bowel disease may cause increased gas with other digestive symptoms. Medicines and supplements, including some fibre products, laxatives, and medicines that alter carbohydrate absorption, can also affect digestion. Do not stop a prescribed medicine without advice.

When to seek medical care

Farting by itself is rarely an emergency. Arrange a routine appointment if it lasts several weeks, is a clear change from normal, interferes with daily life, or does not improve after simple dietary changes.

You should also book an appointment if it comes with:

Seek same-day medical advice for significant belly pain with fever, repeated vomiting, bloody stool, or marked abdominal swelling.

Get emergency help for sudden or severe persistent abdominal pain, especially with a hard or

swollen belly, repeated vomiting, fainting, or an inability to pass stool or gas. These symptoms can occur with a bowel blockage or another condition needing prompt assessment.

- Unexplained weight loss or reduced appetite
- Ongoing diarrhoea or constipation
- Repeated or persistent belly pain
- Blood in your stool
- Greasy, unusually pale, or difficult-to-flush stools
- Symptoms that regularly wake you from sleep

How the cause is found

A healthcare professional will ask when the farting started, whether it relates to particular foods, and about bowel movements, pain, bloating, weight changes, medicines, previous surgery, and family medical history.

They may feel and listen to your abdomen. Tests are often unnecessary when symptoms are mild and there are no concerning signs.

If symptoms persist, blood tests may check for coeliac disease, anaemia, or inflammation. Breath tests can sometimes assess difficulty digesting lactose or other sugars. Stool tests, scans, or an examination of the bowel may be considered when there is bleeding, ongoing diarrhoea, weight loss, or another specific concern.

Treatment and self-care

Treatment depends on the cause. A short food and symptom diary can help identify patterns without removing many foods at once. Record what you eat, when symptoms occur, and whether you have constipation or diarrhoea.

You may find it helpful to:

If one food seems responsible, reduce it for a limited period and observe what happens. Avoid cutting out whole food groups long term without guidance, as this can cause nutritional deficiencies.

People with suspected lactose intolerance may benefit from a supervised lactose-reduction trial or lactase products. A low-FODMAP diet may help some people with irritable bowel syndrome. Because it is restrictive and requires planned reintroduction, it is best followed with

a dietitian.

Non-prescription products such as simethicone or enzymes used with particular foods may help some people, but results are mixed. Ask a pharmacist which product is appropriate and whether it could affect your medicines.

- Eat slowly and chew with your mouth closed
- Try smaller meals if large meals trigger symptoms
- Reduce fizzy drinks, chewing gum, and drinking through straws
- Stay physically active to help gas move through the bowel
- Treat constipation with advice from a pharmacist or clinician
- Increase fibre gradually rather than suddenly

What to expect

Food-related farting may improve within hours or days after the trigger passes. Gas caused by constipation may settle as bowel movements return to normal.

Symptoms caused by an intolerance or ongoing digestive condition may recur until the underlying issue is managed. Improvement often involves identifying personal triggers rather than avoiding every food known to produce gas.

Follow up with a healthcare professional if symptoms continue despite reasonable changes, become more frequent, or develop alongside pain, weight loss, bleeding, or altered bowel habits.

Common questions

Is farting every day normal?

Yes. Passing gas is a normal result of swallowing air and digesting food. What matters is whether there has been a persistent or uncomfortable change from what is usual for you.

Why does my wind smell so strong?

Odour usually comes from sulfur-containing gases produced by gut bacteria. Foods, constipation, and changes in digestion can affect the smell. Strong-smelling gas alone does not identify a particular disease.

Should I avoid beans and vegetables?

Not automatically. These foods can produce gas but also provide fibre and nutrients. Smaller portions, gradual increases, and careful preparation may make them easier to tolerate.

Can stress cause more farting?

Stress can affect bowel movement, eating habits, and sensitivity to gas. It may worsen symptoms, especially with irritable bowel syndrome, but new or persistent symptoms should not simply be assumed to be stress-related.

Sources

- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases: Symptoms and causes of gas in the digestive tract
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases: Treatment for gas in the digestive tract
- NHS: Farting - flatulence
- American Family Physician: Gas, bloating, and belching-approach to evaluation and management
- American College of Gastroenterology clinical guideline: Management of irritable bowel syndrome